

105th Congress, 1st Session - - - - - House Document 105-63

STATUS ON ZAIRE

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

A LETTER NOTIFYING THE CONGRESS THAT ON MARCH 25, 1997, A STANDBY EVACUATION FORCE OF THE U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL FROM THE U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND AND THE UNITED STATES DEPLOYED TO CONGO AND GABON TO PROVIDE ENHANCED SECURITY FOR THE MORE THAN 300 AMERICAN PRIVATE CITIZENS, GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AND SELECTED THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS IN KINSHASA, ZAIRE, SHOULD THEIR EVACUATION BECOME NECESSARY



APRIL 9, 1997.—Referred to the Committee on International Relations and
ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

39-011

WASHINGTON : 1997

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, March 27, 1997.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: The Republic of Zaire has been embroiled in an internal conflict for several months. Rebels seeking to oust ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko have captured more than one-fifth of the country. While there is no evidence that Americans are being directly targeted, the potential for civil disorder and general unrest in Kinshasa may subject American citizens and property to a range of risks, including those from criminal acts and random violence.

On March 25, 1997, a standby evacuation force of U.S. military personnel from the U.S. European Command and the United States deployed to Congo and Gabon to provide enhanced security for the more than 300 American private citizens, government employees, and selected third country nationals in Kinshasa, should their evacuation become necessary. We do not anticipate that the more than 200 remaining American citizens outside Kinshasa will be at risk. These forces augment the noncombat-equipped enabling forces that deployed to Congo on March 21, 1997, to prepare for a possible evacuation operation.

The enabling and evacuation forces based in Brazzaville, Congo and Libreville, Gabon are prepared for a possible evacuation. These forces include a forward deployed Joint Task Force Headquarters, fixed-wing and rotary aircraft, airport control and support equipment, and medical and security personnel and equipment. In addition, *USS Nassau*, with a Marine Battalion Landing Team and a helicopter squadron reinforced with fixed-wing AV-8 Harrier aircraft embarked, is moving into the area.

Although U.S. forces are equipped for combat, this movement is being undertaken solely for the purpose of preparing to protect American citizens and property. United States forces will redeploy as soon as it is determined that an evacuation is not necessary or, if necessary, is completed.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to prepare to protect American citizens in Zaire.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

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